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ASCS  
Background  
Information

AGENCY  
ORGANIZATION

BI No. 1

United States  
Department of  
Agriculture  
Agricultural  
Stabilization and  
Conservation  
Service

June 1992

The Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS), an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), administers farm commodity, conservation, environmental protection and emergency programs. These programs provide for commodity loans and price support payments to farmers, income support direct payments, commodity purchases from farmers and processors, acreage reduction, cropland set-aside and other means of production adjustment, conservation cost-sharing, rental payments, easement purchases and food and feed emergency assistance.

ASCS finances commodity programs through the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC), a government entity for which ASCS provides operating personnel. ASCS programs and services are further described in BI No. 2, *Commodity Credit Corporation*; No. 3, *Production Adjustment/Price Support*; No. 4, *National Security Emergency Activities*; and No. 5, *Conservation/Environmental Protection Programs*.

ASCS maintains its headquarters in Washington, DC; an office in each State, usually located in a State capital or near a State land grant university, and in most counties; a Caribbean Area Office in Puerto Rico, which also serves the Virgin Islands; a Commodity Office, a Management Office and a Financial Management Office in Kansas City, MO., and an Aerial Photography Field Office in Salt Lake City, UT.

**Office of the  
Administrator**

ASCS is headed by an Administrator, an Associate Administrator, four Deputy Administrators, and an Executive Assistant. Large sections of the organization report to the Deputy Administrators, while three staffs and two divisions report to the Administrator through the Executive Assistant.

The Executive Analysis and Appraisal Staff directs and approves policy and dockets prepared for submission to CCC's Board of Directors, coordinates with USDA's Office of the Inspector General and the General Accounting Office in conducting audits, investigations, and surveys dealing with State and county offices, and manages county operations reviews.

The Legislative Liaison Staff serves as a focal point for legislative matters. It acts as a link with the Office of the Secretary of Agriculture and the Congress regarding legislation.

The Correspondence Writing Staff oversees the preparation and management of responses to correspondence addressed to executives concerning ASCS programs and responsibilities.

The Information Division develops and administers a comprehensive information service program including news releases, publications, reports, speeches, and radio and television materials. It also handles Freedom of Information Act and Privacy Act inquiries.

The National Appeals Division holds hearings and makes determinations on formal appeals by participants in programs and operations of ASCS and CCC.

## **State/County Operations**

The Deputy Administrator, State and County Operations (DASCO), directs and administers activities for four divisions: Conservation and Environmental Protection; Cotton, Grain and Rice Price Support; Emergency Operations and Livestock Programs; and Tobacco and Peanuts. The divisions develop policies and regulations for farm price support, production adjustment, farm storage, natural disaster and defense-related emergencies, soil and water conservation, and other activities. DASCO maintains liaison with other State and federal agencies and groups with agricultural and conservation interests.

DASCO also supervises five area offices, located in Washington, DC, to which 50 State Offices and an office in Puerto Rico report. Under the guidance of Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation (ASC) committees, operations in States and counties are carried out by ASCS employees.

In each State office, a State Executive Director (SED), appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture, supervises program and administrative specialists. District Directors, attached to the State office and supervised by the SED, provide management oversight and liaison between the State office and county offices in their districts.

In county offices, a County Executive Director (CED), who is employed by the county ASC committee, supervises day-to-day office operations. The CED hires employees who staff the office.

## **Farmer Committees**

State and county Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation committees, whose members are actively engaged in farming or ranching, administer and oversee ASCS programs and activities and the field operations of CCC. Although these committees were established under the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act, which was enacted in 1935, the Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1938 mandated their use for making decisions on farm programs within counties.

State ASC Committees consist of three or five members appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture. In each State, the Director of the Agricultural Extension Service is a non-voting *ex officio* member. The State committee has overall responsibility for the administration of farm programs and the efficient operation of county offices within a State.

In some counties, called one community counties, eligible farmers elect the county ASC committee members. Other counties are divided into three local administrative areas (LAA's), in which case farmers elect community committees that in turn elect county committees. There are over 3,053 county committees, one for each "agricultural county" in the Nation.



A county committee consists of three regular members (each of whom serves a staggered 3-year term), and two alternate members in one community counties. There are two alternate members elected from each LAA in those counties having three LAA's. The County Agricultural Extension Director is a non-voting *ex officio* member of the county ASC committee.

To hold office as a county committee member, one must be eligible to vote in committee elections or represent an entity that is eligible to vote, reside in the LAA or county, as applicable, and meet certain other requirements to ensure that political activity or conflict of interest is not involved in committee operations or decisions. In general, those eligible to vote in ASC committee elections are persons of legal voting age who have an interest in a farm as owner, operator, tenant, or sharecropper, and who are eligible to participate in the programs administered by the committee.

## **Commodity Operations**

The Deputy Administrator, Commodity Operations (DACO), administers activities in commodity operations, warehousing, and storage. DACO's four divisions (Commodity Operations, Storage Contract, Dairy and Licensing Authority) develop policies and regulations for the dairy program, for the storage, licensing, handling and disposition of CCC-owned commodities, and for the approval of public warehouse operations under the U.S. Warehouse Act. DACO also develops policies for sales agreements of specified commodities, for negotiating and carrying out sales agreements, and for developing policy recommendations concerning export and domestic commodity donations programs.

DACO also oversees the Kansas City Commodity Office (KCCO). KCCO is responsible for the acquisition, handling, storage, processing and disposal of bulk and processed commodities as required to fulfill CCC program commitments. These CCC activities are coordinated in Washington, DC, under guidance of the ASCS Administrator, who is also Executive Vice President of CCC.

KCCO's activities include: Sales of CCC-owned or controlled commodities for domestic or export use; donations of available commodities under foreign and domestic distribution programs; commodity transfers to other U.S. Government agencies; issuance of payments to domestic users and exporters of upland cotton under marketing certificate programs; and examinations of farm commodity warehouses. Private storage facilities are used, as well as the services of commercial carriers, vendors, processors and other commercial enterprises.

## **Management**

The Deputy Administrator, Management (DAM), provides administrative support activities for all ASCS offices. Responsibilities include formulation and administration of policies and programs that concern ASCS and CCC budgets, property, space allocation, procurement, printing, communications, computer technology, forms and records management, automated data processing activities, employment and employee relations, aerial photos, and management information systems. DAM oversees all financial management activities for ASCS and CCC, including strategic planning, internal controls, cash and debt management activities, financial risk analysis of CCC-funded foreign export programs, financial statements, and financial operations for commodity programs.

DAM directs and coordinates a tri-agency (ASCS, Food and Nutrition Service, and Agricultural Marketing Service) organization of the processed commodity inventory management systems to improve the operations of the processed commodity inventories system.

The Equal Employment Opportunity and Civil Rights Staff develops and operates appropriate programs. It also provides data on ASCS employment and program participation, evaluates programs for their effects on minority groups, and handles discrimination complaints.

DAM supervises two offices in Kansas City. The Kansas City Financial Management Office (KCFMO) and the Kansas City Management Office (KCMO). KCMO plans and implements the use of automatic data processing equipment and computer systems to improve operations of ASCS and CCC programs. KCMO provides personnel management services, records management, procurement and contracting, communications services, printing and reproductions and warehousing.

KCFMO formulates policies and plans for the nationally centralized ASCS and CCC accounting and financial management operations, under the direction of the Financial Management Division, Washington, DC. KCFMO also handles debt management, commodity program claims, accounting data for farm programs, and other accounting transactions.

At Salt Lake City, an Aerial Photography Field Office (APFO) coordinates aerial photography work for USDA, provides aerial photography for ASCS, provides aerial photo contracting for USDA, and provides reproductions for government agencies and the public. It also represents ASCS in remote sensing activities.

## **Policy Analysis**

The Deputy Administrator, Policy Analysis (DAPA), is responsible for economic analysis and policy assessment for all ASCS programs. Primary responsibilities include: (1) formulating and developing new policy approaches; (2) improving mechanisms for monitoring and controlling policy activities; (3) participating in USDA decision-making processes of administering ongoing programs; and (4) consulting with the leadership of agricultural producers.

Work plans and decision calendars for policy and program development are provided on a routine basis. Standard DAPA outputs include decision memorandums on policy issues, environmental and regulatory impact statements, economic impact analyses of program options, supply/demand/price expectations for program crops, and ASCS/CCC budget projections.

DAPA provides leadership in analytical activities, special projects, information management, and regulatory process control. It also administers seven divisions which are responsible for analysis of grains, oilseeds, fibers and rice, tobacco and peanuts, dairy, sweeteners, and natural resources.